



How to Revise

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful





Assalamu'alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu,

We pray that this message reaches you
in good health and imaan.

On behalf of our AMAU Academy team, we would like
to present to you these compiled notes that we have
prepared to make your journey with us a lot easier.

Our notes are compiled by the AMAU Admin team
and have not been comprehensively checked
by a teacher.

If you find any errors or corrections that need
to be made, kindly inform us via our email
helpdesk@amauacademy.com

May Allah make our paths toward seeking
beneficial knowledge easy and kindle our hearts
with sincerity and gratefulness
towards Him.

Jazakumullahu Khayran



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Three Categories of Reading

Glossary



جل جلاله | Jalla Jalāluhu
Allah the Most Exalted



صلى الله عليه وسلم | Sallāllāhu Alayhi Wa Sallam
Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him



رضي الله عنه | RadiAllahu `anhu
May Allah be pleased with him

Taking Good Notes

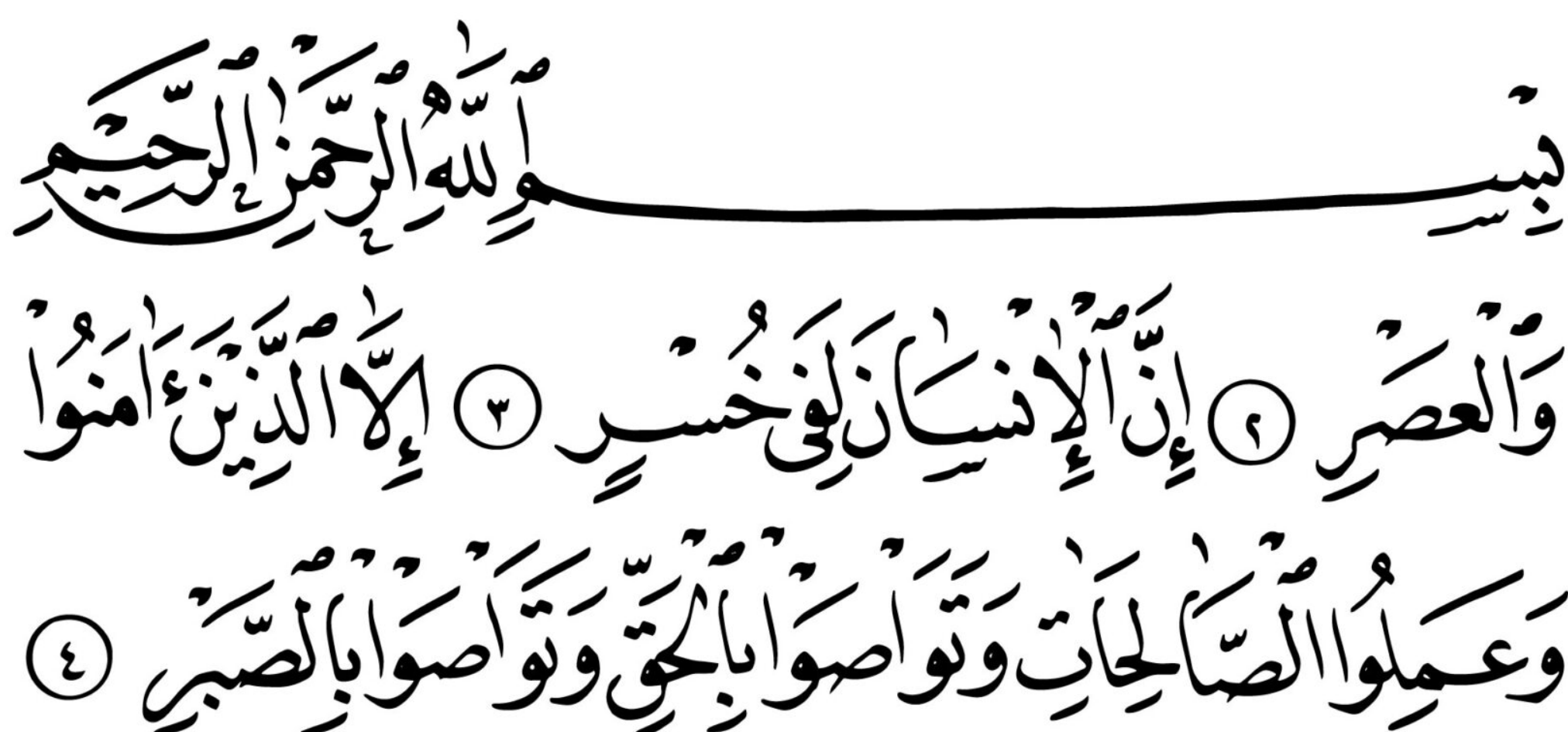
Chapter One

In this course, we aim to delve into the topic of effective revision. In it, we will draw insights from the perspective of the Prophet's ﷺ statement, "الدِّينُ النَّصِيحَةُ".

This concept, Naseehah, entails sincerity towards others, and a part of this sincerity lies in giving and taking good advice from one another. It involves advising the leaders as well as the ordinary Muslims.

Mutual advice, as highlighted in the Qur'an, is a cornerstone of this religion.

Allah ﷻ says:



By Al-'Asr (the time). Indeed, mankind is in loss, Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience.

Al-'Asr 1 - 3

A valuable resource for further exploration of this theme is a book titled "Min Wasayaa as-Salaf" (من وصايا السلف). Compiled by Sheikh Saleem al-Hilaali, it comprises insights from early generations, including figures like 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib, and Sufyaan ath-Thawri.

One particularly noteworthy piece of advice within this collection is attributed to 'Abbaad ibn 'Abbaad. Found in Sunan Ad-Daarimi, it emphasises the significance of giving and receiving advice.

Honouring Those Who Advise Us

Acknowledging that advice can sometimes be delivered in a rough or hurtful manner, it is crucial to recognise its value and embrace it even when it comes from people who show us enmity.

In truth, when someone, even an adversary, writes or speaks negatively about you, their underlying desire is for you to disregard their advice.

Enemies harbour insincerity; they don't genuinely wish for you to heed their counsel. If someone criticises you, they don't want you to improve or benefit from their guidance.

It's intriguing to note a conversation between two scholars. One sought advice from another, disclosing that a peer had maligned him, spreading false accusations and causing him immense distress. The seeking scholar asked the other for suggestions on handling the situation.

The response was insightful: "Look at everything he says, acknowledge the truth, and implement it. There's nothing that disrupts the plans of an enemy more than genuinely embracing beneficial advice."

In our faith, offering advice is fundamental, emphasising the importance of delivering it in the best possible manner, unlike those who choose to do so in a harmful manner.

The status of someone who invests time in advising you should be elevated in your eyes, as they genuinely care for your growth and improvement.

‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab رضي الله عنه once said:



رَحِمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ أَهْدَى إِلَيَّ عُيُوبِي

“May Allah have mercy on the one who shows me my faults.”

Sunan al-Dārimī 649

Returning to the recommended book, "Min Wasayaa as-Salaf," it serves as a compilation of timeless advice from early Islamic generations. Its contents offer practical guidance from historical figures, shedding light on the importance of sincere counsel within the community.

Classroom Etiquette

Now, let us transition to the main focus of the course – the art of revision. The objective is to guide students in avoiding common pitfalls as they embark on their journey of learning and revision.

First and foremost, let us delve into the crucial aspect of classroom etiquette. A significant determinant of successful revision is the quality of your engagement during class.

Four key components make up this etiquette:

- 1 Attendance
- 2 Attentiveness
- 3 Writing
- 4 Asking Questions

1 Attendance

Attendance holds paramount importance. You should be present in class ideally before the teacher arrives. Cultivate the habit of being seated and ready with your materials. This practice applies universally, irrespective of the teacher's status.

2 Attentiveness

Remaining attentive during class is the next pillar. Despite the inevitable fatigue or sleepiness, it is essential to resist succumbing to drowsiness. Employ techniques such as rubbing your face, changing your position or standing up discreetly to maintain focus. The benefits of good note-taking hinge on your attentiveness in class.

3 Writing

Make a habit of writing. Even when you are listening to recorded lessons.

Writing is a powerful tool for memorisation. In the past, writing down the entire Mushaf was a major part of Hifdh of the Qur'an.

While it may be challenging to transcribe every word of your teacher, focus on capturing key facts, evidence references, and critical points. Utilise symbols and marks to denote uncertainties or areas requiring further exploration.

4 Asking Questions

Ask the right questions at the right time. Adherence to the teacher's guidelines regarding question sessions is vital. Asking questions is an indication of attentivity.

Taking Notes

Regarding note-taking, prioritise essential details such as:

- **key facts**
- **A piece/part of evidence (such as a few words of a hadith, etc.)**
- **references**
- **critical points (such as dates, etc.)**

Employ a strategic approach, capturing information that facilitates easy retrieval and understanding during revision. Recognise that not every word requires transcription, and focus only on meaningful content.

Also, look out for important queues, remarks or suggestions made by your teacher. For example, he or she may indicate that a certain point is worth noting down. It can be done in a number of ways. Here are a few examples to help you get a better idea:

- **“So far, we have covered five points.”**
- **“This is important.”**
- **“It is often asked in exams.”**

If you have been taking notes during a class and come across confusion or uncertainty - for instance, regarding names, details, etc. - mark them for later clarification.

Tidying Them Up

Chapter Two

After class, you will notice that the first draft of your notes is quite messy with lots of ellipses, exclamation marks, and margin notes. To begin the process of organising your notes, you have to clean them up.

1 Cleaning Up Your Notes

Remember this rule: **If you do not clean up your notes within 24 to 36 hours, you will not understand anything you have written.** Even experienced note-takers struggle to comprehend their own notes after a certain period.

Thus, this step needs to be finished promptly. Utilising audio or video recordings of the lecture aids in this process. You can rewatch the recordings at an increased speed. The only thing you need to do is fill in the gaps you left during the lecture.

2 Check References

Verifying the accuracy of references is crucial, even if the teacher is a strong Hafidh with extensive knowledge. Teachers may inadvertently misquote or attribute statements to the wrong source. For example, one might say, “Ibn al-Qayyim said...” when it was Ibn Taymiyyah.

Therefore, actively seek the original references, especially when the teacher cites from memory or makes errors in attributions.

● External Sources

When reading articles or works by other authors, it's crucial to check and confirm every Aayah of the Qur'an, Hadith, or quote mentioned. A lot of times, articles on the internet misquote the references. This diligence prevents the perpetuation of inaccuracies in subsequent references.

● Physical vs. Digital References

While capitalising on the internet's speed for reference checking, do not overlook the enhanced credibility offered by physical books. Though searching for references in physical books demands more effort, the benefits derived from them outweigh those from the internet.

For instance, if you find that Ibn al-Qayyim cites a reference in his book to Tafseer at-Tabari, consulting the physical copy of the Tafseer book is valuable. As you flip through the pages and actively search for the reference, you encounter multiple benefits that can be noted down and retained for future use and study.

This method establishes a more dependable foundation for academic work.

3 Asking Questions

Once your notes start to become clearer, you may feel the need to find missing links, close all gaps and get your doubts cleared. This can only be done by asking questions.

Ideally, your questions should be posed to the teacher. In cases where direct access to the teacher is not possible, seeking answers from senior students who have close interactions with the teacher is a good alternative.

4

Selecting Important Information

Suppose your notes have become clean and organised. However, they may still be bigger than what you really need. What should you do?

Begin by differentiating between information that is extremely important and one that is less important. The order of importance should follow a structure similar to the one given below:

- **Highlight or mark the areas/points that form the core of the lecture or topic.**
- **Any Daleel (evidence) - if given - should be marked and taken note of. You do not need every single Daleel given by the Sheikh. But choose the one that is the strongest.**
- **If you see a quote which is extremely beneficial and you feel you can use it for many topics in the future, add it and keep it.**

In the process of organising and tidying up your notes, the emphasis lies on prioritising, recognising that while all information may be valuable, some elements are more critical to understanding the subject matter.

Knowledge is divided into two key aspects: understanding and memorising. Understanding the material is considered paramount, with memorisation following suit. It is because comprehension is especially crucial for adults.

5

Memorisation

When it comes to memorisation, it is divided into two types:

- **Literal Memorisation**
- **Approximate Memorisation**

-

Literal vs. Approximate Memorisation

Literal memorisation, akin to Hifdh of the Qur'an, demands precision in retaining exact wording. Conversely, approximate memorisation involves repeated reading and reviewing, fostering a more general and flexible grasp of the content.

Regular and consistent revisiting of material ensures a deeper understanding and contributes to a semi-accurate form of memorisation.

Converting Knowledge Into Different Forms

Chapter Three

Converting knowledge into different forms is an effective strategy to aid retention and retrieval.

For instance, when studying a text, consider whether it exists in a poetic form, as some people find poetry easier to grasp and memorise.

Historical events, when converted into a journey map or a visual representation, become more comprehensible. Explore different mediums such as glass pens, mind maps, or even creating a physical journey on a wall for effective revision.

1 Utilising Poetry for Memorisation

Poetry proves valuable for memorisation, especially for challenging subjects like the Qiraa'aat. Historical examples include Shatibiyyah, a poem that made the Qiraa'aat more accessible to learners. Search for poems or rhymes related to the topics you're studying. Poems are extremely helpful for remembering dates and numbers.

However, poetry may not suit everyone's learning style, so you should adapt your revision methods based on personal preferences.

2 Knowledge as Keys to Wider Learning

MEMORISING SPECIFIC TEXTS, EVEN IN PART, SERVES AS KEYS THAT UNLOCK DOORS TO BROADER KNOWLEDGE.

Memorising a poem or specific text in Aqeedah, for example, doesn't encompass the entire science, but serves as keys that open doors to related Aayaat, ahadith, statements of scholars and so on. The objective is not to memorise everything verbatim but to have keys that trigger a broader understanding.

3 Customising Revision Methods

Students need to tailor their revision methods based on personal preferences and learning styles. Whether through mind maps, bullet points, or visual aids, the goal is to make the information more digestible and easier to internalise and remember. The key is to convert knowledge into a form that resonates with individual learning preferences.

4 The Importance of Organising Notes

Maintaining organised notes is essential. Often, students lose or misplace lecture notes from prominent scholars. This leads to a loss of knowledge.

Even with digital tools like devices or cloud storage, a lack of order and organisation of study material can hinder finding books or notes efficiently.

Therefore, a student should store both physical and digital copies of notes and tag them appropriately for easy retrieval.

Pro Tip: Even if you primarily use paper-based materials such as notebooks, ensure to create a digital backup by scanning and storing them online, in an app, or on a device with proper labelling or tagging for easy retrieval.

This precaution is crucial because paper can easily get destroyed or lost, and notes are among the most valuable resources for students of knowledge.

Regular Prompting and Repetition

Chapter Four

To get the most out of this course on revision, let us understand how to shift knowledge from short-term memory to its long-term version.

1 Transitioning From Short-Term to Long-Term Memory

To facilitate the transfer of knowledge from short-term to long-term memory, we need to apply the concept of "regular prompting and repetition."

2 Regular Prompting - How It Works

This means that the Aayah, hadith, lines, etc. you want to retain keep on appearing before your eyes. It can be done in a number of ways:

- **Using apps with flashcards that have spaced repetition. They basically remind you of things you do not remember well enough. For example, Anki.**
- **Sticky notes that you can stick around in your room, study table, door, car, etc. so that you keep on coming across it.**
- **Writing on glass or a small whiteboard.**

Memorising a portion in a single sitting is not enough to store it in long-term memory.

Information needs to first be forgotten and revisited multiple times to be stored in long-term memory effectively. Regular prompting involves repeated exposure to the material/portion in different contexts, times, and places to ensure that it becomes deeply ingrained.

3 Repetition - Lots of It

Wondering how much repetition you need?

Suppose you can memorise an Aayah, hadith, line of poetry, bullet points, etc. fairly well by repeating it n number of times.

To get the actual repetitions you need, add a zero next to the value of n.

Revisiting information consistently aids in retention.

4 How to Tell If Knowledge Has Made It to Your Long-Term Memory?

A piece of information stored in your long-term memory requires no effort to recall.

For example, if someone asked you, "Recite the Aayah after مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ", it will automatically roll off your tongue. It is because it has been stored in your long-term memory.

5 Levels of Hifdh

Let us now learn about balancing between Hifdh and revision.

When it comes to Hifdh, it is divided into:

● Old

This includes well-established knowledge/portions, and requires periodic revisiting. For example, once a week, every two weeks, or monthly, etc. If you never review it, it will go.

● New

This represents the latest material/portion you will be memorising or have just finished memorising today.

● Recent

This is the one that requires the most attention and focus because it is in your short-term memory and needs to be shifted into your long-term memory. Thus, if you do not give it time and effort, it will disappear from your memory.

6 Balancing Old, Recent, and New Hifdh

An organised timetable is vital for balancing the revision of old, recent, and new portions of Hifdh. Always remember to exert more effort on recent Hifdh to prevent it from escaping your memory.

Pro Tip: *NEVER start a new portion until your recent ones have become firmly established in your memory.*

Even when it comes to curricular books and notes, be sure to revise them every six months or so.

7 Test Yourself

Write exam questions for self-testing. These questions can be based on a series of lectures.

Writing questions for oneself and testing recall helps reinforce the learned material.

8 Revise With Your Peers

Arrange sessions where you sit with your friends and engage in revision together. It is called Mudhaakarah.

Group revising involves collaborative efforts with peers, discussing notes, and correcting each other's understanding in a supportive environment.

Writing Notes on Books



Chapter Five

Writing notes on textbooks is a common practice that occurs during lessons. It has advantages and disadvantages.

PROS



Making notes on textbooks is quicker as you can easily access the text.

It is a good revision tool as you are required to be highly selective when writing on the margins.

CONS



The space on the margins is very less.

It is difficult to make neat and accurate notes on books.

With that said, you may choose what works best for you. If you decide to write in the book, be very selective due to limited space. Alternatively, writing on paper during the lesson and transferring notes onto the book later can be more organised.

Choose the Right Book for Your Notes

When deciding which book to make notes on, you have two options:

- If the Sheikh is teaching a specific text (Matn), notes can be made directly on the text itself.
- Alternatively, you can take notes on the most famous explanation of that text. If, however, the Sheikh is teaching the text from a particular explanation, make notes on that explanation. This helps you save a lot of writing time.

Consolidating Notes Onto a Single Book

Consolidating all your notes on a single book is the third stage of revision. It is highly effective.

Let’s consider you have studied several books of ‘Aqeedah by Sheikh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab, such as Kashf ush-Shubuhaat, Al-Usool ath-Thalaatha, Al Qawaaid Al-'Arbaa and others.

You have notes of each book. So, you consolidate all of those notes onto a single book, thereby making it your primary source of reference and revision.

The recommended book for consolidation is the last and most advanced book studied in that science, focusing on its most trusted and comprehensive explanation.

Going back to the example of ‘Aqeedah, the most advanced and detailed book would be Kitab at-Tawheed. You select its best explanation, i.e., Fath al-Majeed.

Finally, you bring the notes of every ‘Aqeedah book on the margins of Fath al-Majeed. This is how the consolidation of notes is done.

What's the Benefit of Consolidating Notes?

Instead of revising and going through all the books and explanations of a particular writer or science, you get one primary book that contains all your notes on the books of that science.

The idea behind this technique is to have as few books for every science as possible.

Writing Notes on the Textbook

Let us now discuss the way to write notes in books.

● Write the Taraf or the Shaahid

Ensure you shorten lengthy content, such as a page-long hadith, by writing only a few words (Taraḥ) and the reference for the hadith. Alternatively, you can write just the essential part or words you need from the hadith (Shaahid), along with references.

The same can be done for quotes from scholars. You can also maintain an index that can direct the references you write on books to your full notes.

● Use Codes

Utilise codes - rather than full names - for books or references to save time and effort. For example, for Musnad Ahmad, use codes like "حم".

Consider the well-known codes for famous books of hadith:

Sahih Bukhari - خ | Sahih Muslim - م | Sunan Abu Dawood - د

Writing notes in your book helps with revision by making you choose what's important to write.

Writing Summaries

This has been a common practice among the earlier generations.

It involves writing a “Talkhees” or a summarised version of your own notes of a book. You can choose the length of your summary.

You can summarise an entire lesson on a single page or even a small revision card, for instance.

Writing summaries involves carefully selecting the most vital information from a lecture, a course or a Dawrah, and organising it in a condensed form for quick and efficient review.

A lot of people revise books by writing their summaries. Its length can be anywhere from a few pages to about one-third of a book.

Three Categories of Reading

Chapter Six

In the final chapter, we will discuss the three categories of reading. This revision strategy aids in maintaining a grasp of the knowledge you have gained.

1 Your Core Curriculum

The first and most important category includes the books forming your curriculum. In other words, every important book you have studied to become a student of knowledge comes under this category. This applies to all subjects/Islamic sciences.

Scheduled Review: Revise the books of your core curriculum every six months.

You need to go through every essential book of your curriculum and your notes on it. You have to do it within six months - or a year if the curriculum is too big. Once done, repeat your revision within the same time period.

2 Structured Reading

You make a well-defined plan and study specific books based on that structured plan. This category helps you achieve particular goals.

Some examples of structured reading are as follows:

Read all available works on a chosen subject (such as the different Qiraa'aat)

Study the works of a particular scholar (such as Ibn al-Qayyim)

In structured reading, you follow an order while studying books to achieve the goal you have set for yourself.

Summarisation: Write concise summaries of books you study to aid revision.

3 Free Reading

This category is where you can enjoy reading books not restricted to your curriculum. It can be any beneficial book you come across or has been recommended to you by your Sheikh.

You can extract benefits from them and note them down. If needed, you can even integrate them into the notes of your curricular studies.

Although free reading is good, it comes after the above-mentioned categories.

Ask Allah for Help

Every student of knowledge goes through an experience where he sits in a class and is not able to understand a thing. It is normal.

Imam Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūti is known to have said that he struggled to find the answer to a particular knowledge issue for about forty years!

In such situations, you must turn to Allah ﷻ and seek help from Him.

Mark the things or issues you do not understand. It could be that later when you return to it, Allah ﷻ will give you an understanding of that issue.

You might even be required to go over a book four to five times before you grasp what is in it.

Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

1

[...] فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

And Allāh guided those who believed to the truth concerning that over which they had differed, by His permission. And Allāh guides whom He wills to a straight path.

Al-Baqarah 213

This Aayah tells us that, in matters of dispute and Ikhtilaafaat, Allah ﷻ guides the people of Imaan to the truth.

Whenever Ibn Taymiyyah struggled to understand an issue, he would make du'aa to Allah ﷻ to show him the right answer.

Sins Repel Knowledge

Sometimes, you may feel that your pen has become heavier. You might notice a decrease in the inner drive to seek knowledge, and your studies and revision may start to suffer.

This is the effect of sins. They cover a student's heart and hinder knowledge from entering it.

Allah ﷻ says:

2

كَلَّا بَلْ سَرَّانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

Nay! But on their hearts is the Rân (covering of sins and evil deeds) which they used to earn.

Al Mutaffifeen 14

Therefore, you must engage in Istighfaar and do good deeds. As a result, you will realise that your pen has become light again and doors of understanding have been opened for you.

It has been said that, with the exception of the Prophet ﷺ, nobody could understand the different dialects of the Arabic language.

This Deen is too big and vast to be fully understood by a single person.

The Golden Advice

THE BEST WAY TO REVISE KNOWLEDGE IS TO PUT IT INTO PRACTICE.

For instance, if you hear about a Sunnah, carry it out.

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal said, “I did not write a single hadeeth except verily I acted on it, to the extent that it reached me that the Prophet ﷺ was cupped and gave Abu Tayba a dinar, so I was cupped and gave the cupper a dinar.”

Acting upon what you learn is the best way to retain knowledge.



To ensure your progress,
we recommend that you take
this self evaluation quiz based
on the notes and video
series that you have
just completed.

Attempt Quiz

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